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College Irresponsibility

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Colleges students have been eager to complain about the rising cost of tuition, but students at the University of North Texas last week voted to hike their per-hour fees to pay for a new football field. Of course, they actually voted for a fee that won't go into effect until at least the fall of 2011 – when most of them will be long gone.

The per-hour athletics fee the UNT adds to the price of tuition will see a net increase of \$7 per semester credit hour with promises from heads of the university, the athletic department, and members of the Student Government Association that it will improve the athletic programs of UNT. This new fee will also go to help pay for the development of a new football stadium, which officials say will help recruit better talent, improve our football program, and – not to worry – the new stadium will be all “green.”

If students are concerned about the current amount they pay in tuition, and it should be implied by “they” most of the time that means mom and dad, why would they vote to increase their student fees?

Student fees are essentially taxes the university places on the students (and mom and dad) beyond the sticker-price of the per-hour tuition. One would assume that the last thing students would want is for any of these fees to increase. Of course, it is easier to vote for such an increase when it is for future students and future students' moms and dads.

The university was able to sell the fee hike to the students by stressing that it wouldn't go into effect for at least three years. That's shameful. Worse? Fourteen percent of the student body participated in the election, and out of those who voted, 58.1% voted in favor of the new fee.

The wording of the referendum was:

"In order for the University of North Texas to have a better Athletic program, which in turn can lead to national exposure and increased recognition of UNT; I agree to a dedicated Athletic Fee not to exceed \$10 per semester credit hour, capped at 15 hours. Once the Athletic Fee is implemented, the Student Service Fee will be reduced by \$3 per semester credit hour. The Athletic Fee shall not be implemented until the semester the new football stadium is complete, which is expected to be fall 2011."

With the de-regulation of tuition for public universities, many rightly worry about how it is becoming increasingly more expensive for middle class families to send their children to college, and an increase in student fees makes the price to attend a school like the University of North Texas that much more expensive.

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